

VZCZCXRO6256  
RR RUEHAG RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLZ RUEHROV  
DE RUEHFR #2746 1771608  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 261608Z JUN 07  
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8504  
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC  
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES  
RUEHMRE/AMCONSUL MARSEILLE 1804  
RUEHSR/AMCONSUL STRASBOURG 0442  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2698  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 6335

UNCLAS PARIS 002746

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

BRUSSELS PASS USEU FOR AGMINCOUNSELOR  
STATE FOR EBB; OES; EUR/ERA;  
STATE PASS USTR FOR MURPHY; MOWRY/SANFORD;  
USDA/OS/JOHANNIS/TERPSTRA;  
USDA/FAS FOR OA/YOST/JACKSON/ROSADO;  
OCRA/CURTIS/ALEXANDER;  
ONA/RIEMENSCHNEIDER/YOUNG; STA/SIMMONS/JONES/HENNEY  
OFSO/LEE/YOUNG;  
USDA/RMA FOR CALLAN  
EU POSTS PASS TO AGRICULTURE AND ECON  
GENEVA FOR USTR, ALSO AGRICULTURE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [PGOV](#) [WTRO](#) [EUN](#) [FR](#) [PINR](#)

SUBJECT: MICHEL BARNIER OUTLINES GOALS AS NEW FRENCH MINISTER OF  
AGRICULTURE, INITIATES BIOTECH DIALOGUE

REF: (A) 2007 PARIS 2642; (B) 2007 PARIS 1448

11. SUMMARY: THE NEW FRENCH MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE MICHEL BARNIER  
(REFTEL A) DELIVERED HIS FIRST OFFICIAL SPEECH AT THE YOUNG FRENCH  
FARMERS' UNION ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN EPINAL ON JUNE 21. BARNIER  
ASSURED THE AUDIENCE THAT HE WILL DEFEND THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL  
POLICY, WILL ADVOCATE AN INCREASE IN FRANCE'S DEVELOPMENT OF  
BIOFUELS AND MAINTAIN A HARDLINE ON DOHA NEGOTIATIONS. FINALLY, HE  
ANNOUNCED THE CREATION OF A HIGH COUNCIL OF BIOTECHNOLOGY TO ADDRESS  
THE SENSITIVE BIOTECH ISSUE. END SUMMARY

12. BARNIER APPEARED BEFORE A LARGE AGRICULTURAL GATHERING LESS THAN  
48 HOURS AFTER HIS NOMINATION AS MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND  
FISHERIES. HE BEGAN BY ACKNOWLEDGING CONCERNS ABOUT THE MINISTRY OF  
AGRICULTURE BUDGET, WHERE SEVERAL THOUSAND RETIRING EMPLOYEES WILL  
NOT BE REPLACED IN 2008. MOVING TO EUROPEAN ISSUES, HE EMPHASIZED  
HIS AIM TO REINFORCE THE HARMONIZATION OF EUROPEAN RULES,  
SPECIFICALLY SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY REQUIREMENTS. CONCERNING  
THE 2008 HEALTH CHECK OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (A SIMPLE  
EVALUATION OF THE 2003 REFORM IN HIS WORDS), HE CALLED ON FRENCH  
FARMERS TO INCREASE THEIR DIALOGUE WITH EUROPEAN COUNTERPARTS TO  
INCREASE FRANCE'S INFLUENCE WITHIN EUROPE. IN HIS VIEW, THE FUTURE  
CAP SHOULD BE MORE SUSTAINABLE. HE ALSO MENTIONED NEW TOOLS SUCH AS  
INSURANCE AS A MEANS TO SUPPORT AGRICULTURE IN THE FUTURE.

13. BARNIER REASSURED THE FRENCH FARMERS AUDIENCE OF FRANCE'S  
"HARDLINE" STANCE IN THE WTO NEGOTIATIONS. NOTE: AT THE TIME OF THE  
SPEECH, THE FAILURE OF THE POTSDAM TALKS HAD NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC -  
END NOTE. HE SAID THAT HE WILL NOT BE COMPLACENT WITH PASCAL LAMY,  
HIS FORMER COLLEAGUE AT THE EU COMMISSION, STATING "THE EUROPEAN  
UNION SHOULD BE OPEN, NOT OFFERED."

14. BARNIER HIGHLIGHTED FRANCE'S GROWING BIOFUEL PROGRAMS AND  
PROMISED TO INVIGORATE THEM, WITH THE CAVEAT THAT HE WILL ENSURE  
THEY DO NOT COMPETE WITH FOOD OR FEED PRODUCTION. HE SAID THAT MORE  
MONEY WILL BE SPENT ON R&D ON NEW BIOFUELS DEVELOPMENTS SUCH AS  
CELLULOSIC BIOFUELS.

15. IN CONTRAST TO PREVIOUS SPEECHES BY FRENCH MINISTERS OF

AGRICULTURE, BARNIER EXPLICITLY ADDRESSED THE BIOTECH ISSUE. NOTE: PRIOR TO HIS NOMINATION, BARNIER WAS ON THE BOARD OF THE FRENCH MEDICAL AND BIOTECHNOLOGY COMPANY, MERIEU -END NOTE. HE INTRODUCED THE SUBJECT BY LINKING TRADITIONAL PLANT BREEDING TO MASTERING DNA MUTATIONS, SAYING THAT FRANCE MUST REMAIN ACTIVE AND TRANSPARENT IN THIS SCIENTIFIC EVOLUTION. HOWEVER, HE EMPHASIZED, THAT AS A POLITICAL LEADER, HE MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT CONSUMER CONCERNS.. TO ACHIEVE THIS, HE ANNOUNCED THE CREATION OF A HIGH COUNCIL ON BIOTECHNOLOGY, WHICH WILL UNDERTAKE A PUBLIC DIALOGUE ON GMOS. NOTE: SUCH A HIGH COUNCIL WAS PROVIDED FOR IN THE BIOTECH BILL, WHICH WAS PASSED BY THE FRENCH SENATE IN MARCH 2006 BUT NOT BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (REFTEL B). FAS PARIS CONTACTS SUGGEST THAT THIS LAW MAY GO TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN THE LATE AUTUMN, AFTER A LARGE FRENCH ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE. END NOTE

15. COMMENT: MOST FARM ORGANIZATIONS AND FARM LEADERS ARE PLEASED WITH THE NOMINATION OF BARNIER. HIS SPEECH IN EPINAL WAS WIDELY APPLAUDED. FARM LEADERS BELIEVE THAT HIS STRONG EUROPEAN BACKGROUND (REFTEL A) WILL STRENGTHEN FRANCE'S POSITION AT THE EU LEVEL. THEY DO HOWEVER FEAR THAT, DUE TO HIS PREVIOUS POSITION AS MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, HE MIGHT IMPOSE MORE STRINGENT ENVIRONMENTAL RULES ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.

16. ON BIOTECH, WHERE THE CORN FARMERS ARE RAPIDLY EXPANDING PRODUCTION, AND THE REGULATORY COMMUNITY TENDS TO TAKE A REASONED, SCIENCE-BASED APPROACH, THE MAIN DETERRENT IS PUBLIC OPINION. MINISTER BARNIER, IN INITIATING A PUBLIC DIALOGUE, COULD HELP PROVIDE THE PUBLIC WITH OBJECTIVE INFORMATION THAT MAY COUNTER BALANCE THE MISINFORMATION DISSEMINATED BY ANTI-BIOTECH ACTIVISTS. HERETOFORE, THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAS NOT ATTEMPTED TO TACKLE THIS PROBLEM. END COMMENT.

STAPLETON